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CEREBUS
MELMOTH
TEN
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Rest
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LOCATAIRE
149
AUG

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

"Oscar Wilde: a summing up" continues

When Ger and I were over in Coventry, England for a convention a couple of years back, the Oscar character had made his first appearance in *Jaka's Story*. The convention (through no fault of the organizers) had turned out a good deal smaller than they had expected. It was still one of the best cons I've attended. I saw Neil Gaiman there. The theatre company who were co-sponsors of the event did a wonderful adaptation of Alan Moore's *Brought to Light* as a one-man play. Quite a trip it was sitting next to Alan as the dramatisation unfolded, the entire room silent enough to hear a pin drop.

In the middle of the second day, one of the organizers brought a small package to the table where I was signing autographs and doing a few sketches. He told me it had arrived in the post, c/o the convention, addressed to me. It contained a short complimentary note and a copy of a book by a Mr. Neil Bartlett entitled *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr. Oscar Wilde*. The back cover copy was as follows:

"Sitting up reading late at night, the author reflects on the links between the homosexual life of the 1980's and his counterparts of a century ago, between gay lives today and those of Oscar Wilde, his friends, lovers and acquaintances. Many books have been written about Oscar Wilde. Who Was That Man? is unique—the acting out of a love-hate relationship between Wilde and a gay Londoner of today."

In actual fact, the book was a good deal more interesting than that. I sat up all night reading it. Bartlett, for his own edification, had researched a history of homosexuality in England, emphasizing the period between the Boulton and Park scandal of 1871 and the Oscar Wilde trials of 1895; a period, incidentally, when the word 'homosexual' did not yet exist as a noun. It is a long, torturous explanation of 'gay-ness' for want of a better term. As I was reading it, I kept thinking 'I understand what he's saying.' Which was a bit odd, because I am definitely in the 'squeamish' category when it comes to male homosexuality. My gorge rises; a profound sense of disgust sweeps over me at explicit descriptions. Why, then, did I feel so certain that I understood what he was saying?

I think it's because the comic book world is so very like his descriptions of the gay world.

Both are things you are supposed to out-grow; which most *do* out-grow. I mean boys will be boys and hard-ons will be hard-ons, but once you hit puberty there are a certain number of things you are supposed to put away; *permanently*. The first two or three years of senior public and high school, when all my friends gave up comic books, I became an object of ridicule and great suspicion because, not only had I *not* given them up, they became even more important to me than ever before. I met a guy named Max Southall the summer between senior public and high school who had a beautiful collection of *Batman, Detective* and *World's Finest*, mint runs of *Justice League* from no. 1 up, *Flash* from 105 up, including the *Showcase* appearances.

I started grade nine at the same high school as Max and was crushed when he ignored me in the halls. I *understood* that grade twelve guys didn't associate with grade nine guys, but I still felt a great loss that we couldn't spend our lunch-hours discussing the "new look" Batman versus the "old-look" Batman.

It wasn't just the age difference. It was the shame; the dirty little secret; of still reading comic books in high school.

The invisibility. When Bartlett speaks of the invisibility of the gay community, it is as valid a description of the comics world as you could hope to find. We, too, have a secret language which identifies us, one to the other. Attending the 1940's segment of the Brant County Museum's exhibit on Canadian comics, I overheard Ross Menzies (one of the Canadian Whites' artist/writers) mention Dave McKean. My ears pricked up as I poured myself a coffee. Then he said, "And that guy who drew *Stray Toasters*." I turned around and just blurted out, "Sienkiewicz. Bill Sienkiewicz. He's one of my best friends." An instant rapport was formed with someone twenty years my senior and we jabbered away at each other for half an hour without taking a breath. Foster, Robbins, Caniff, Raymond, Prentice.

Think how exotic our language is; how exotic it gets. A language intelligible to half a million (at most) on a continent of two hundred and sixty million.

"Man on a Rampage", C.C. Beck, Gaines, Barks

Fine tune it.

Pepper Potts, Baxter Building, Steve Trevor, Wally West.

Finer and finer.

Marvel Mystery, "Master Race", Brave and Bold, Haunted Tank, Zeta Beam, Detective 27, Tales of Suspense 39, Showcase 4, Kandor.

And yet we're invisible. We have our places we hang out together where the air hangs heavy with the verbal short-hand and we feel at home. Back out in the street we could be anyone. Nothing identifies us as comic book people; unless we choose our own form of 'drag'; a white lightning bolt on a black t-shirt, a happy face with a smear of blood on it.

The major difference, of course, is that the ridicule and the embarrassment and the shame we face, while it varies from conversation to conversation, from person to person, at least stops at mere embarrassment. Imagine what it must be like to have something at the core of your existence; something so essentially *you* (as comic books have been for me since I was seven) that not only causes you acute embarrassment through your school years, that not only sets you apart from "normal" people, but which, for hundreds of years, if discovered, could guarantee you a lengthy jail term, a severe beating, possible death, the loss of everything you hold dear, the enmity of family and friends.

No matter how repellant the thought of homosexuality is to me, to you, or to society, it is irrefutable that it is a significant part of the human condition—a good deal more significant and ubiquitous than, say, comic book fans who are adults—it always *has* been and it always *will* be. It is what many people are. Not what they "choose to be". Not what they "have reduced themselves to." It is neither an addiction, nor a character flaw, nor a disease.

It's like reading comic books past the age of thirteen.

Only it's about a thousand times more common.

To the fellow who sent me *Who Was That Man;* mentioning in his letter that he was attending the convention; obviously fearful of my heterosexual misunderstanding and/or wrath. Next time please introduce yourself.

I owe you a great deal.

CEREBUS

NO. 149 AUGUST 1991

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

MONIQUE KAPTEIN
Administrative Assistant

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

MELMOTH
a short story
•
(Cerebus 139 to Cerebus 150)

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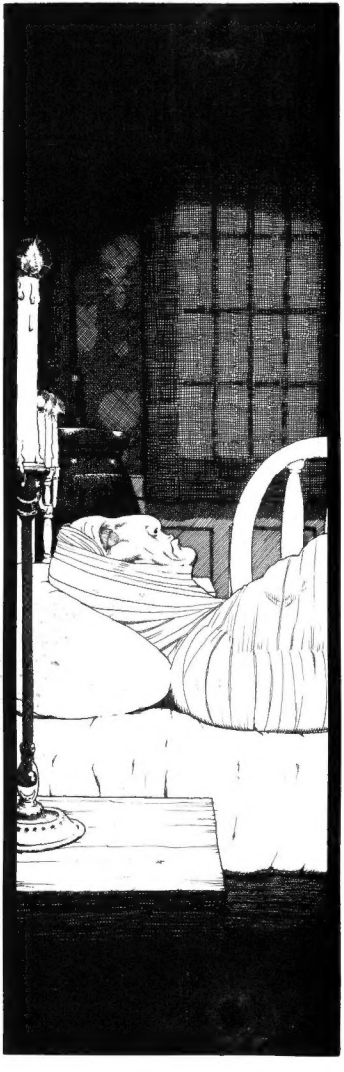

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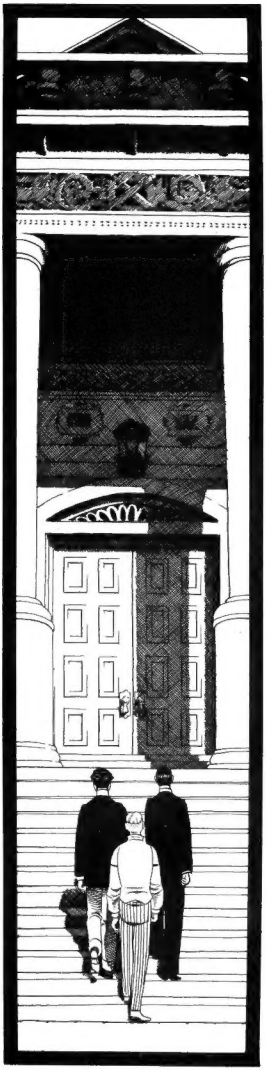
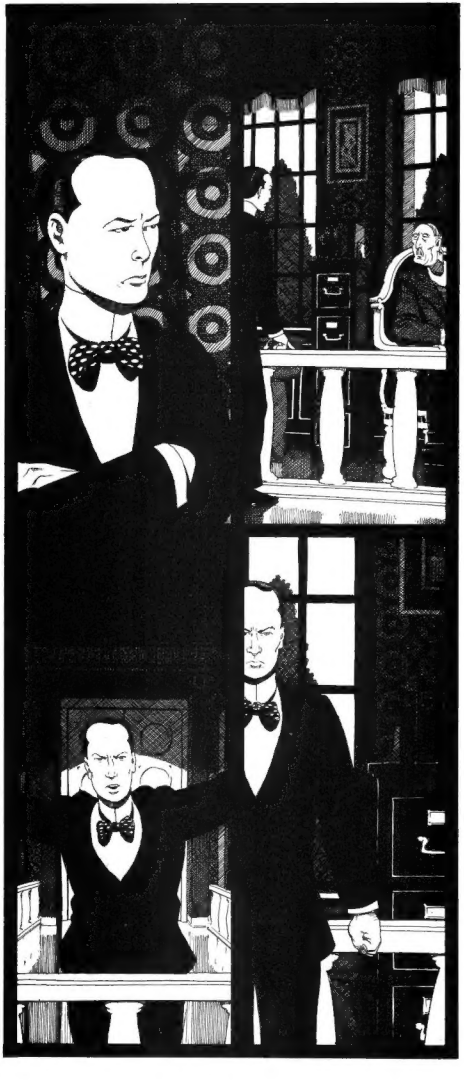


I then got angry and insisted on going to Gesling the undertaker to the Lower Feldan Embassy, to whom Father Cuthbert had recommended me.



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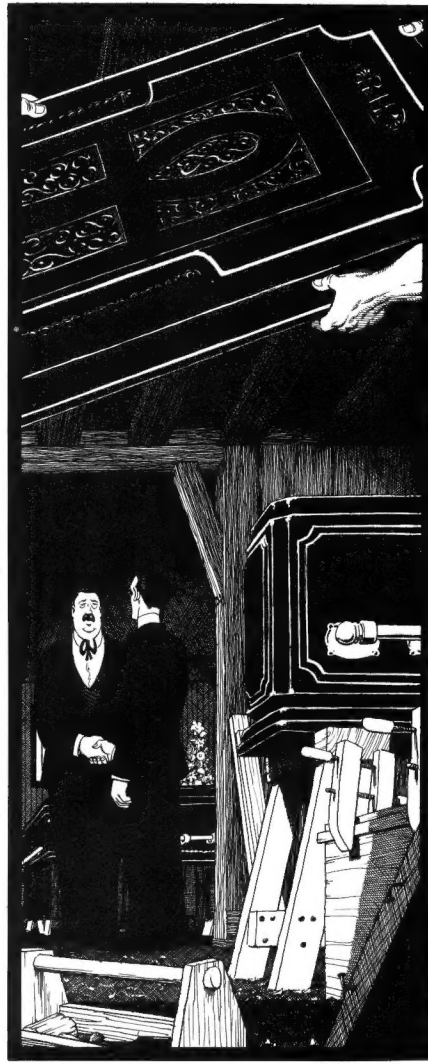

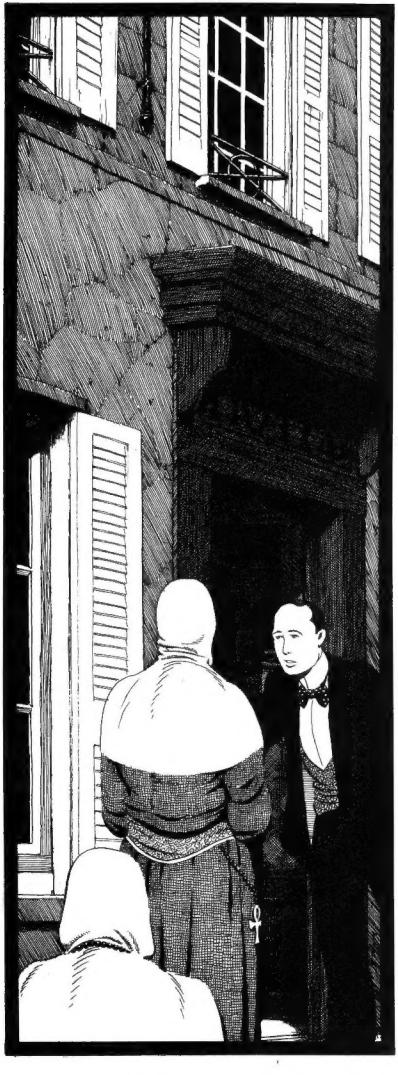

. . .
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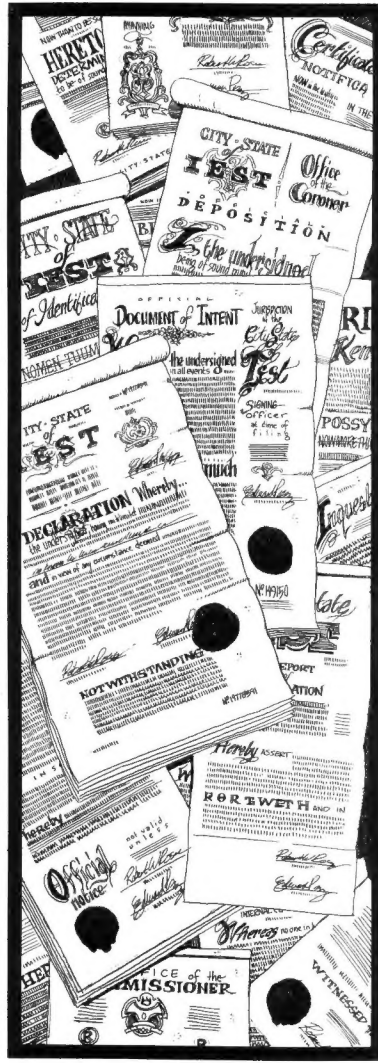
sisters

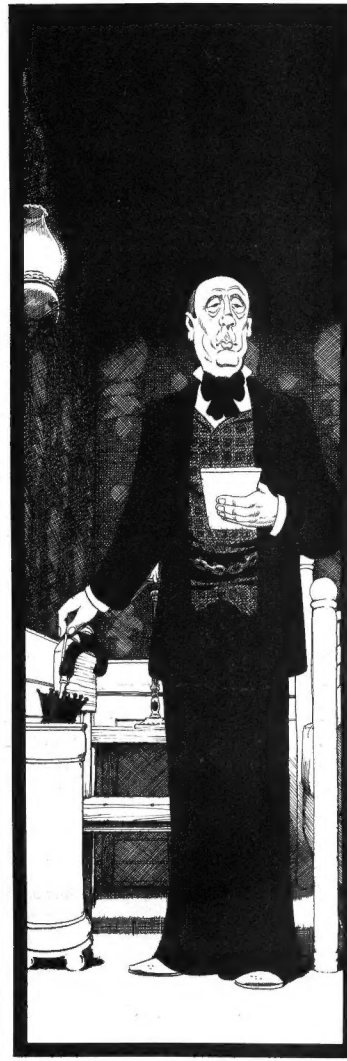
Gesling was most intelligent and promised to call at the Hotel d'Alsace at 8 o'clock next morning. While Reggie stayed at the hotel interviewing journalists and clamorous creditors, I started with Gesling to see officials.

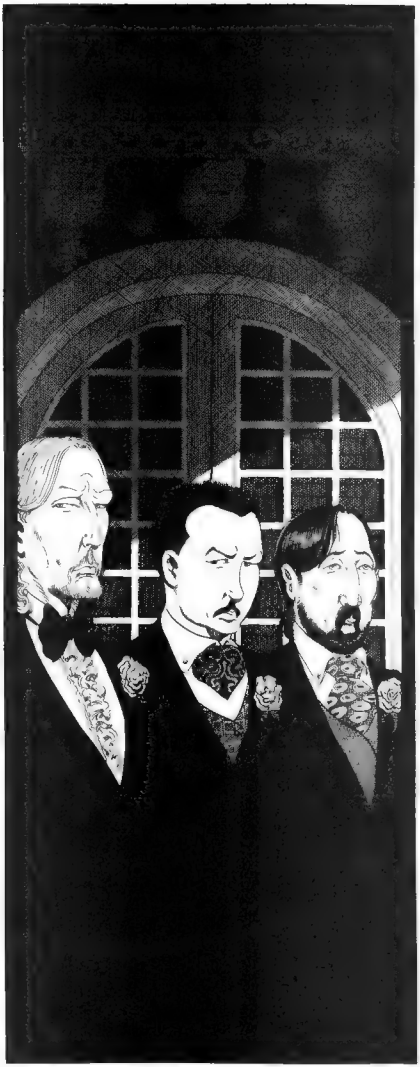
We did not part till 1.30, so you can imagine the formalities and oaths and exclamations and signing of papers. Dying in Iest is really a very difficult and expensive luxury for a foreigner.



It was in the afternoon the District Doctor called and asked if Oscar had committed suicide or was murdered. He would not look at the signed certificates of Kleiss and Tucker. Gesling had warned me the previous evening that owing to the assumed name and Oscar's identity the authorities might insist on his body being taken to the Morgue. Of course, I was appalled at the prospect; it really seemed the final touch of horror. After examining the body, and, indeed, everybody in the hotel, and after a series of drinks and unseasonable jests, and a liberal fee, the District Doctor consented to sign the permission for burial.

Then arrived some other revolting official; he asked how many collars Oscar had, and the value of his umbrella. (This is quite true, and not a mere exaggeration of mine)





Then various
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Robert d'Humières,
George Sinclair

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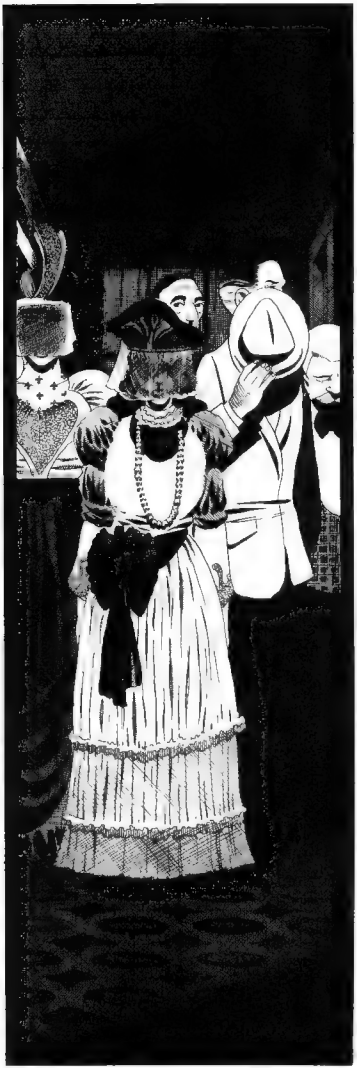
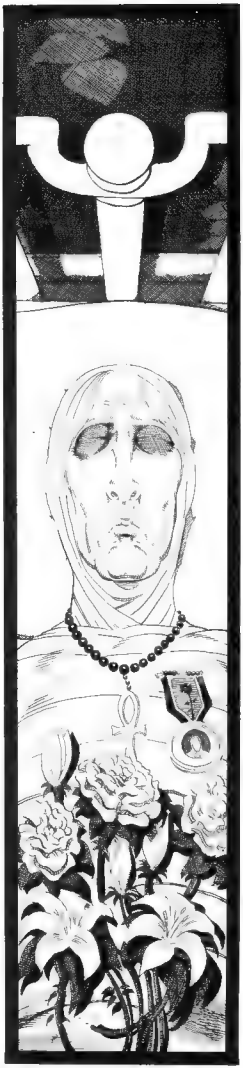
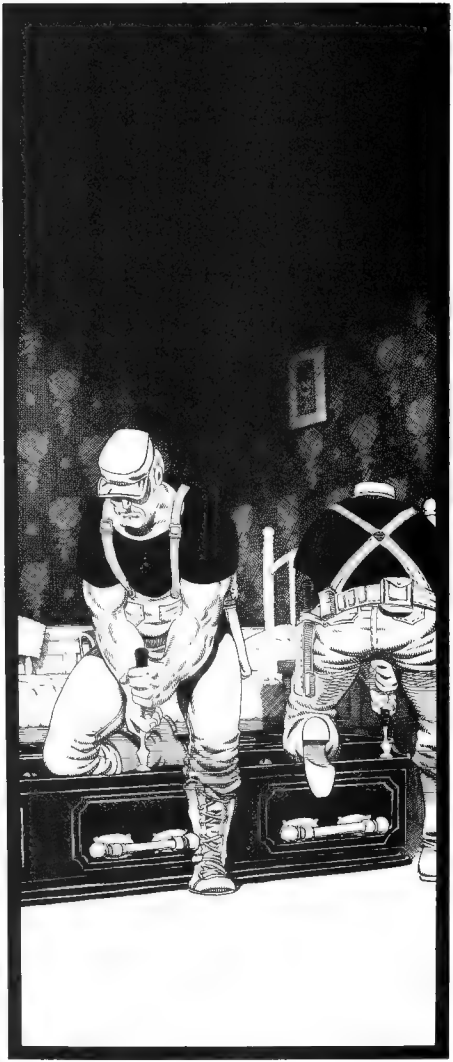


I am glad to say dear Oscar looked calm and dignified, just as he did when he came out of prison, and there was nothing at all horrible about the body after it had been washed. Around his neck was the blessed rosary which you gave me, and on the breast a medal given to me by one of the nuns, a few flowers placed there by myself and an anonymous friend who had brought some on behalf of the children, though I do not suppose the children know their father is dead.

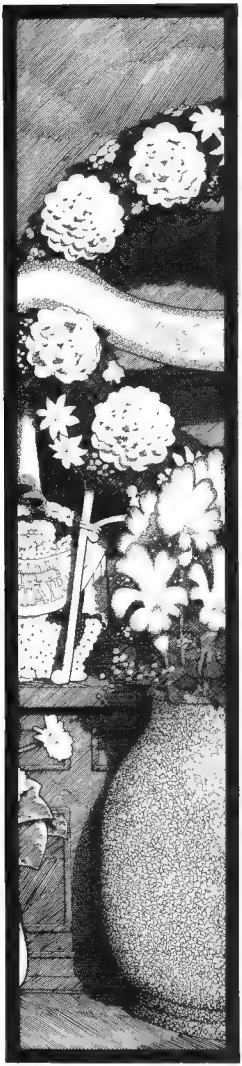


Gesling had advised me to have the remains placed in the coffin at once as decomposition would begin very rapidly, and at 8.30 in the evening the men came to screw it down.



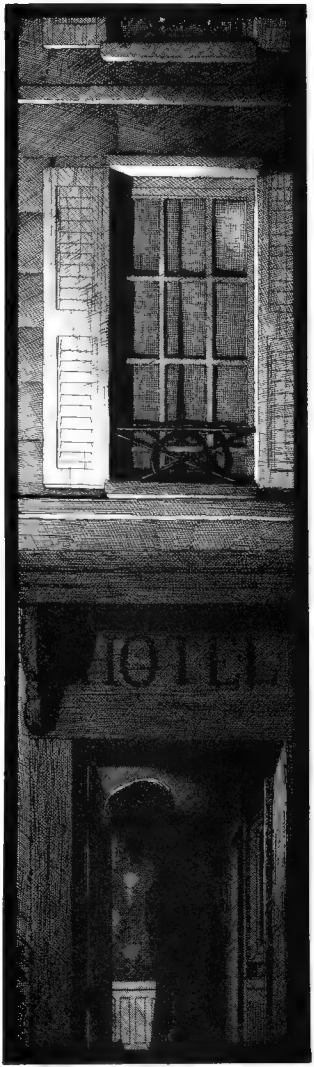
The next day, Alfred Douglas arrived, and various people whom I do not know called. I expect most of them were journalists.

After a low mass, said by one of his *vicaires* at the altar behind the sanctuary, part of the burial office was read by Father Cuthbert. The *Suisse* told me that there were fifty-six people present—there were five ladies in deep mourning—I had ordered three coaches only, as I had sent out no official notices, being anxious to keep the funeral quiet. The first coach contained Father Cuthbert and the acolyte; the second Alfred Douglas Turner, the proprietor of the hotel, and myself; the third contained Madame Stuart Merrill, Paul Fort, Henry Davray and Sarluis; a cab followed containing strangers unknown to me. The drive took one hour and a half; the grave is at Bagneaux, in a temporary concession hired in my name—when I am able I shall purchase some ground elsewhere at Pere la Chaise for choice. I have not yet decided what to do, or the nature of the monument.



There were altogether twenty-four wreaths of flowers; some were sent anonymously. The proprietor of the hotel supplied a pathetic bead trophy, inscribed "*A mon locataire*" and there was another of the same kind from the *service de l'hôtel*", the remaining twenty-two were, of course, of real flowers. Wreaths came from, or at the request of, the following: Alfred Douglas, More Adey, Reginald Turner, Adela Schuster, Mr. and Mrs. Teixeira de Mattos Maurice Gilbert and Dr. Tucker.

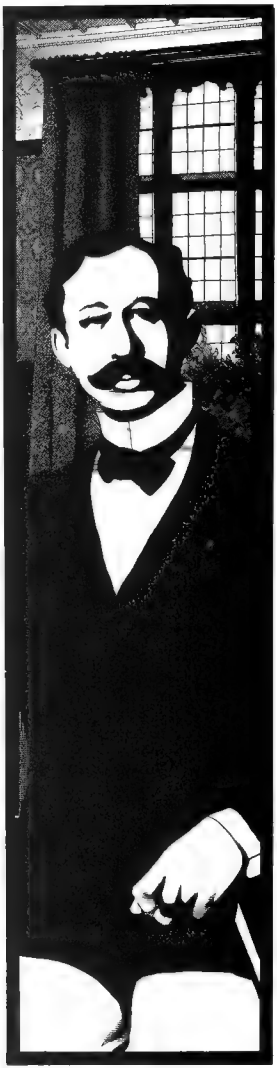
At the head of the coffin I placed a wreath of laurels inscribed, "A tribute to his literary achievements and distinction." I tied inside the wreath the following names of those who had shown kindness to him during or after his imprisonment "Arthur Humphreys, Max Beerbohm, Arthur Clifton, Ricketts, Shannon, Conder, Rothenstein, Dal Young, Ada Leverson, More Adey, Alfred Douglas, Reginald Turner, Frank Harris, Louis Wilkinson, Mellor, Adela Schuster, Rowland Strong and Carlos Blacker."



I can scarcely speak in moderation of the magnanimity, humanity and charity of Dupoirier, the proprietor of the Hotel d'Alsace. Just before I left Iest, Oscar told me he owed him over 190 crowns. From the day Oscar was laid up he never said anything about it. He never mentioned the subject to me until after Oscar's death, and then I started the subject. He was present at Oscar's operation, and attended to him personally every morning. He paid, himself, for luxuries and necessities ordered by the doctor or by Oscar himself out of his own pocket. I hope that Douglas or Harris will at any rate pay him the money still owing.

Dr. Tucker is also owed a large sum of money. He was most kind and attentive, although I think he entirely misunderstood Oscar's case.

Reggie Turner had
the worst time of all in
many ways—he experienced
all the horrible uncertainty and
the appalling responsibility of which he
did not know the extent. It will always
be a source of satisfaction to those who
were fond of Oscar, that he had
someone like Reggie near him during
the last days while he was
articulate and sensible of
kindness and attention



"And alien tears will fill for him
Pity's long-broken urn
For his mourners will be outcast men
And outcasts always mourn"

Oscar Wilde
The Ballad of Reading Gaol

AFTERWORD

The text pieces in *Melmoth* are taken directly from; Robert Ross' letter to More Adey of 14 December 1900, two weeks after Oscar Wilde's death (*Cerebus* 140 – *Cerebus* 143, *Cerebus* 148, *Cerebus* 149) and Reginald Turner's letters to Robert Ross of 26 November 1900 (*Cerebus* 144) 27 November 1900 (*Cerebus* 145) 28 November 1900 (*Cerebus* 146) and 28 November 1900 (5.30 pm) (*Cerebus* 147). References to telegraph wires and other modern features as well as place names have been changed to suit the fictional city of Iest (Paris, in this case), Lower Felda (England), etc.

On the ensuing pages are reproduced photocopies from the Epilogue to the *Collected Letters of Oscar Wilde* to give you, the curious reader, a look at some of my modifications.

I regret particularly having to exise this reference in Reginald Turner's last letter to Ross;

"After holding an ice bag on his head for three quarters of an hour he said to me, 'You dear little Jew, don't you think that's enough?' "

I decided there was no proper substitute for 'Jew' and I really couldn't face the avalanche of mail I anticipated questioning the existence of Judaism in ancient Estarcion. This is the last documented comment of Oscar's that could be deemed articulate. And, of course, witty.

I also eliminated this from the last page of this issue;

"A plain tombstone was later set above the grave at Bagneaux bearing these words from the twenty-ninth chapter of the Book of Job: *Verbis meis addere nihil audebant et super illos stillabat eloquium meum* ("To my words they durst add nothing, and my speech dropped upon them")

In 1909 Oscar Wilde's body was moved to the cemetary of Pere Lachaise in Paris where it rests under Jacob Epstein's monument and Wilde's own words."

I opted just for the photo of the monument and the quote inscribed on it.

Good-bye, Oscar. I'll miss you.

he had become quite thin, the flesh was livid, his breathing heavy. He was trying to speak. He was conscious that people were in the room, and raised his hand when I asked him whether he understood. He pressed our hands. I then went in search of a priest, and after great difficulty found Father Cuthbert Dunne, of the Passionists, who came with me at once and administered Baptism and Extreme Unction—Oscar could not take the Eucharist. You know I had always promised to bring a priest to Oscar when he was dying, and I felt rather guilty that I had so often dissuaded him from becoming a Catholic, but you know my reasons for doing so. I then sent wires to Frank Harris, to Holman (for communicating with Adrian Hope) and to Douglas. Tucker called again later and said that Oscar might linger a few days. A *garde malade* was requisitioned as the nurse had been rather overworked.

Terrible offices had to be carried out into which I need not enter. Reggie was a perfect wreck.

He and I slept at the Hotel d'Alsace that night in a room upstairs. We were called twice by the nurse, who thought Oscar was actually dying. About 5.30 in the morning a complete change came over him, the lines of the face altered, and I believe what is called the death rattle began, but I had never heard anything like it before; it sounded like the horrible turning of a crank, and it never ceased until the end. His eyes did not respond to the light test any longer. Foam and blood came from his mouth, and had to be wiped away by someone standing by him all the time. At 12 o'clock I went out to get some food, Reggie mounting guard. He went out at 12.30. From 1 o'clock we did not leave the room; the painful noise from the throat became louder and louder. Reggie and myself destroyed letters to keep ourselves from breaking down. The two nurses were out, and the proprietor of the hotel had come up to take their place; at 1.45 the time of his breathing altered. I went to the bedside and held his hand, his pulse began to flutter. He heaved a deep sigh, the only natural one I had heard since I arrived, the limbs seemed to stretch involuntarily, the breathing came fainter; he passed at 10 minutes to 2 p.m. exactly.[1]

After washing and winding the body, and removing the appalling *débris* which had to be burnt, Reggie and myself and the proprietor started for the ~~Mairie~~ to make the official declaration. There is no use recounting the tedious experiences which only make me angry to think about. The excellent Dupoirier lost his head and complicated matters by making a mystery over Oscar's name, though there was a difficulty, as Oscar was registered under the name of Melmoth at the hotel, and it is contrary to ~~the French~~ law to be under an assumed name in your hotel. From 3.30 till 5 p.m. we hung about the ~~Mairie~~ and the Commissaire de Police offices. I then got angry and insisted on going to Gesling, the undertaker to the ~~English~~

[1] On Friday, 30 November 1900. The latest medical opinion is that he died of an intercranial complication of suppurative *otitis media*, or middle-ear disease, of which his illness in prison (see p. 404) was an earlier symptom. See "The Last Illness of Oscar Wilde" by Terence Cawthorne, F.R.C.S., in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, February 1959.

Embassy, to whom Father Cuthbert had recommended me. After settling matters with him I went off to find some nuns to watch the body. I thought that in Paris of all places this would be quite easy, but it was only after incredible difficulties I got two ~~Franciscan~~ sisters. Devotionalist

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I am glad to say dear Oscar looked calm and dignified, just as he did when he came out of prison, and there was nothing at all horrible about the body after it had been washed. Around his neck was the blessed rosary which you gave me, and on the breast a Franciscan medal given me by one of the nuns, a few flowers placed there by myself and an anonymous friend who had brought some on behalf of the children, though I do not suppose the children know that their father is dead. Of course there was the usual crucifix, candles and holy water.

Gesling had advised me to have the remains placed in the coffin at once, as decomposition would begin very rapidly, and at 8.30 in the evening the men came to screw it down. ~~An unsuccessful photograph of Oscar was taken by Maurice Gilbert at my request, the flashlight did not work properly.~~ Henry Davray came just before they had put on the lid. He was very kind and nice. ~~On Sunday~~, the next day, Alfred Douglas arrived, and various people whom I do not know called. I expect most of them were journalists. ~~On Monday~~ morning[2] at 9 o'clock, the funeral started from the hotel—we all walked to the Church of St Germain des Prés behind the hearse—Alfred Douglas, Reggie Turner and myself, Dupoirier, the proprietor of the hotel, Henri the nurse, and Jules, the servant of the hotel, Dr Hennion and Maurice Gilbert, together with two strangers whom I did

[1] Presumably Harris's dots. [2] December 3.

not know. After a low mass, said by one of his *vicaires* at the altar behind the sanctuary, part of the burial office was read by Father Cuthbert. The *Suisse* told me that there were fifty-six people present—there were five ladies in deep mourning—I had ordered three coaches only, as I had sent out no official notices, being anxious to keep the funeral quiet. The first coach contained Father Cuthbert and the acolyte; the second Alfred Douglas, Turner, the proprietor of the hotel, and myself; the third contained Madame Stuart Merrill, Paul Fort, Henry Davray and Sarluis; a cab followed containing strangers unknown to me. The drive took one hour and a half; the grave is at Bagneux, in a temporary concession hired in my name—when I am able I shall purchase ground elsewhere, at Père la Chaise for choice. I have not yet decided what to do, or the nature of the monument. There were altogether twenty-four wreaths of flowers; some were sent anonymously. The proprietor of the hotel supplied a pathetic bead trophy, inscribed, "*A mon locataire*," and there was another of the same kind from the "*service de l'hôtel*," the remaining twenty-two were, of course, of real flowers. Wreaths came from, or at the request of, the following: Alfred Douglas, More Adey, Reginald Turner, Miss Schuster, Arthur Clifton, the *Mercure de France*, Louis Wilkinson, Harold Mellor, Mr and Mrs Teixeira de Mattos, Maurice Gilbert, and Dr Tucker. At the head of the coffin I placed a wreath of laurels inscribed, "A tribute to his literary achievements and distinction." I tied inside the wreath the following names of those who had shown kindness to him during or after his imprisonment, "Arthur Humphreys, Max Beerbohm, Arthur Clifton, Ricketts, Shannon, Conder, Rothenstein, Dal Young, Mrs Leverson, More Adey, Alfred Douglas, Reginald Turner, Frank Harris, Louis Wilkinson, Mellor, Miss Schuster, Rowland Strong," and by special request a friend who wished to be known as "C.B."

I can scarcely speak in moderation of the magnanimity, humanity and charity of Dupoirier, the proprietor of the Hôtel d'Alsace. Just before I left Paris Oscar told me he owed him over £190. From the day Oscar was laid up he never said anything about it. He never mentioned the subject to me until after Oscar's death, and then I started the subject. He was present at Oscar's operation, and attended to him personally every morning. He paid himself for luxuries and necessities ordered by the doctor or by Oscar out of his own pocket. I hope that —— or ——[2] will at any rate pay him the money still owing. Dr Tucker is also owed a large sum of money. He was most kind and attentive, although I think he entirely misunderstood Oscar's case.

Reggie Turner had the worst time of all in many ways—he experienced all the horrible uncertainty and the appalling responsibility of which he did not know the extent. It will always be a source of satisfaction to those who were fond of Oscar, that he had someone like Reggie near him during his last days while he was articulate and sensible of kindness and attention.

[1] Presumably Carlos Blacker.

[2] Names omitted by Harris. Probably Douglas and Harris.

Father Cuthbert Dunne's Narrative[1]

MS. Burke

He [Robert Ross] took the next train back to Paris and hurried to the hotel; from there he came at once to the Avenue Hoche where he found me and requested that I should come in haste to attend a dying man. Having been told the necessary details, I went with him prepared to administer Baptism as well as Extreme Unction, with Holy Communion if possible.

As the *voiture* rolled through the dark streets that wintry night, the sad story of Oscar Wilde was in part repeated to me. When we reached the little bedroom of the hotel, the attendants were requested to leave. Robert Ross knelt by the bedside, assisting me as best he could while I administered conditional Baptism, and afterwards answering the responses while I gave Extreme Unction to the prostrate man and recited the prayers for the dying.

As the man was in a semi-comatose condition, I did not venture to administer the Holy Viaticum; still I must add that he could be roused and was roused from this state in my presence. When roused, he gave signs of being inwardly conscious. He made brave efforts to speak, and would even continue for a time trying to talk, though he could not utter articulate words. Indeed I was fully satisfied that he understood me when told that I was about to receive him into the Catholic Church and give him the Last Sacraments. From the signs he gave as well as from his attempted words, I was satisfied as to his full consent. And when I repeated close to his ear the Holy Names, the Acts of Contrition, Faith, Hope and Charity, with acts of humble resignation to the Will of God, he tried all through to say the words after me.

At a later visit, I was if anything more convinced as to his inward consciousness when, in my presence, one of the attendants offered him a cigarette which he took into his fingers and raised to his face, although, in the attempt to put it between his lips, he failed. On his head above the forehead, there was a leech on either side, put there to relieve the pressure of blood upon the brain. At these subsequent visits, he repeated the prayers with me again and each time received Absolution.

Entry No 547 in the Register of St Joseph's Church

1900: Nov. 29 To-day Oscar Wilde, lying *in extremis* at the Hôtel d'Alsace, 13 Rue des Beaux-Arts, Paris, was conditionally baptised by me. Cuthbert Dunne.

He died the following day, having received at my hands the Sacrament of Extreme Unction.

150 plus

[1] Father Cuthbert Dunne C.P. (1869–1950), a native of Dublin, was at this time attached to the Passionist Church, St Joseph's, in the Avenue Hoche, Paris. He bequeathed his papers, including this statement, to Father Edmund Burke C.P., by whose kindness it is here printed. See also Father Burke's article in the *London Magazine* of May 1961.

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Dave:

I'm sorry but I can't hold out any longer. I have to write and tell "Fred Gwinne—Herman Munster of TV's 'The Munster's' " that he misquoted from the film "Star Trek 2 — The Wrath of Khan" in Cerebus 124. He wrote "Message, Spock? None that I am aware of Captain." It isn't, it's "None that I am *conscious* of Captain". Thank heavens, I finally got that off my chest. I also have to say I love *Jaka's Story* (my thanks to Gerald Baker who introduced me to Cerebus) and that the cover of 141 was stunning! By the way, it is possible to read Cerebus and still like X-men etc. — I've certainly read issues of Hellblazer and The Sandman on par with Cerebus, as was X-men 196. I'll be with you and them for as long as I can — thank you to the people at *They Walk Among Us* who are not only currently trying to make this possible by getting hold of issue 142 but who also provide a world where you can discuss aardvarks without people looking strangely at you.

Love and kisses from

Jessica Hall
26 Albion Rd.
Twickhenham
Middlesex
TW2 6QJ

★★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave and Gerhard:

I'd like to start off my letter by saying that Cerebus is a comic I truly love. The writing is always getting better and the artwork; superb!! Dave, it's rare that an artist can work with another artist in such unison so I'd like to give Ger a much needed thanks for the great backgrounds and input he contributes to Cerebus. I always saw Cerebus in the stores but the few times I bought an issue, I found it hard to get into. That was until the day a 'Cerebus' phone book showed up at the local *Capitaine Quebec* (comic book store). It must have been fate because that same day, *Jaka's Story* 1 came out. I've been collecting Cerebus ever since and thanks to a friend lending me all his compilation books, I'm an official Cerebus-hound. Even though I plan to own all your compilation books as my back issues, I found myself buying a lot of back issues because of their beautiful artwork. I just had to own an original comic of those greatly illustrated issues. I want to give you and Gerhard praise for the new issues but a special praise to you Mr. Dave Sim because it must have been hell those first years but you kept Cerebus going and all of us readers owe you a thank you.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Minicucci
1467 Verdi St.
LaSalle, Quebec
H8N 1K5

★★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

Penis envy is natural and scented.

Warmest regards,

Ron Bates
104 Verdun Street
Moncton, N.B.
E1E 2Y8
Canada

★★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave 'n' Ger:

So Lord Jim is buried in Iest? That's one "door" (ouch) Stone didn't go through. But with Mick and Keef around, I suppose it makes sense.

Or is that the tombstone of his great nephew, Sir Grant? Not being such an eternal Kid after all?

Even better, the return of the guy who goes "Mmm . . ."! Showing the ultimate in narcissistic tendencies.

Anyway, I'm not at all miserable, and my life is fulfilling even without the use of illicit drugs. Not counting whatever it is that makes the pages of Cerebus smell so strange.

Oh yeah. Now you've welched out of San Diego, will you be reimbursing my air-fare? Otherwise, I'll have no other choice than to send the legal firm of Hadden, Hadden & Dipp after you.

Bye!

Malcolm Bourne
2 & 4 By Road
Shuttleworth, Ramsbottom
Bury, Lanscashire
BL0 0HH
England

P.S. I tried to write one of those "I'm an even more evil person than everyone else who writes" letters, but the f-word just wouldn't emerge. I tried!! So hard!

★★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave and Gerhard,

Kafka once said, "I believe that we should only read those books that bite and sting us. If a book we are reading does not rouse us with a blow to the head, then why read it?"

I just wanted to say thanks to you both for the blow to the head, bite on the ear, punch in the gut and kick in the shin you provide every month in Cerebus. It is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kevin D. McCarley
3400 Varsity #922
Tyler, TX
USA 75702

★★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Well, well, well it seems Cerebus is returning more or less back to normal. And now we know what became of Posey. Poor wimp . . .

Well, I have reached some startling conclusions that I am still researching, so I will send the proof later. Here goes:

1. The third aardvark is Cirin's daughter.
2. Cerebus is Cirin's son.
3. (But only very possibly) Weishaupt is/was Cerebus' father.

I will send along the fruits of my research soon as I complete it.

Anyway, Melmoth Six and Melmoth Seven were, as usual, quite enjoyable. Also, thank you for your letter.

Humbly,

J. Brandt Dilworth
1012 B Village Greenway
Cary, NC
USA 27511

P.S. Hey, Ranger! Write me because I think I lost your address and #! Sorry!

P.P.S. *3 Cheers for Orson!!!* What a band! What an album!!

Dave Sim,

I really enjoy your comic, too bad you're such an asshole.

Sincerely,

Douglas M. Robertson
of Whitehorse, Yukon

★★★★★★★★★★

So Dave,

Should I move to Tahoe with this woman?

Hi. Sorry I've never written before. It seemed somewhat unfashionable to just write about the mag, and I've never been one for telling thousands of strangers about my personal dilemmas. But what the fuck—all the other Cerebus readers are doing it. So can I join the gang now? Can I huh huh can I?

I've been buying your fine, quality product since the beginning of *Jaka's Story,* which was starting up just as I finished assimilating all of my then-roomate's back issues. Got the four phonebooks; with ya til 300; etc etc etc. (Sorry. Just had to get that fanboy bullshit out of the way.)

Anyway, if I went with her, I'd arrive jobless and practically penniless. I'd be moving away from friends, family, and steady pay. And what if there were no comic shop in Tahoe City? I'd have to get a subscription!

Corn muffin racketeering thespian aura.

So why go? Uhm . . . Mountains! Adventure! An end to my lonely, stagnating existence! At least that's the idea. If it didn't work I'd sort of be stuck out there, wouldn't I?

You know *(Skinny Puppy),* I've been noticing *(In the Nursery)* month after month how people *(Chris & Cosey)* feel compelled to drop *(Front Line Assembly)* band names in order to *(Hawkwind)* somehow assert their superiority *(Gillan)* in musical taste *(Manufacture)* over others. I want you *(Revolting Cocks)* to know right now *(Camouflage)* that there's no way in HELL *(King Diamond)* I'd ever stoop *(Queen)* to that level. *(KMFDM) (MOEV) (Rollins Band)*

So who's the woman, you ask. Well, she's sort of my boss, but she's quitting and moving out west in July (after we go to Europe for two weeks). She's a really neat friend and I enjoy hanging out with her. She's also insanely attractive, which is . . . distracting.

Det var et hyggelig overraskelse a se et norsk brev i bladet for en stund siden. Jeg beklager til alle nordmenn at grammatiken min er ikke veldig godt. Jeg laerte spraket nar jeg var et barn og jeg har glemt sa mye over arene. Fy!

Hmm . . . Guess I don't feel like going into all this as much as I thought. Well, unless you can come up with some advice from this smattering of information, I'll let you know what my decision is/was.

So until Elrod and Roach Rider hook up with the third aardvark and establish the Cerebus West Coast Team, make mine . . . I don't fuckin' believe I'm saying this.

Jon Nuquist
40 Ridgemont Street
Allston, MA
USA 02134

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Mr. Sim:

Enclosed (unless gremlins have been sneaking into international mail again) you will find not only an SASE, but a Single Page of "Pumpkin Boy", a creation of Emily Kaplan (who, for reasons unknown to all, goes under the name of "Ophelia the Creep" professionally) and mine. I (John) do the writing and the layouts; Emily does the rest. (The person referred to as "artistic lubricator" in the credits, Chris Wagner, had no actual creative part in the page, he spilled oil all over my script.) There is very little explanation for Pumpkin Boy. I suppose "Charlie Brown as written by Franz Kafka" would pretty much do it. Obviously, this submission is intended for publication in the CEREBUS bi-weekly. I do hope you find it to your taste.

By the way, if you happen to have any recommendations or help to offer in regards to finding Pumpkin Boy and his psychotic uncle Buck Nekkid a publicational home, by all means feel free to give it. We thought of Tundra, but do they only handle established pros like Veitch or McKean? Just wondering. And don't worry—we have no intention of taking this to Marvel, DC or any of their ancilliary minions. Pumpkin Boy is *ours,* and we intend to keep him that way, thank you very much. (I doubt they'd be interested anyway). Currently, we are hard at work on Pumpkin boy no. 1, which is written completely and merely awaits Ophelia to draw it.

In closing, here is the ultimate JFK joke:

Okay, you *still* don't get this?
Okay, one more time—
This is Jackie Kennedy.
These are JFK's brains on
Jackie Kennedy.
Any questions?

Hey, I've heard worse from you in your letters from the prez, pal!

Ever-so-sincerely,

John L. Roberson
Emily Kaplan
6414 N. Newgard, Apt. #3-E
Chicago, IL
USA 60626-5030

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave & Ger:

Hi again, hope everyone at A-V's doing well. Just a quick note this time. MELMOTH 5 was purty neat.

Ger, I loved the reflections in the door on the cover, & the darkening sky on pages 1-5. Gorgeous stuff.

Dave, I loved the bit with the pigeon, the hallucination sequence, and Doris taking Cerebus' order. The last made me grin, which is always appreciated.

Things are getting ominous over at Oscar's—just look at all those looming shadows! Brr. Looks like another Dave Sim book without a happy ending. We'll see.

Take care and keep up the good work, guys.

Eric Hess
211 Pauline Drive
Saltsburg, PA
USA 15681

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave?

I was just wondering? You know that picture of Connie Lingus where she's reading Joyce? and wearing a 40 Dog t-shirt? So, do you think Connie is sleeping with any members of 40 Dog? I hope not cos like they're my favourite band and I have a *really* big crush on the singer, Andy.

And Dave? In #145? I hope she goes for the red shoes cos you can get black shoes anytime but to get a pair of red shoes? that are the right red for your blouse? *and* the right red for your purse? Well, that's really major.

Marie Mundaca
473 Tysens Lane
Staten Island, NY
USA 10306

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Sorry I haven't written in awhile, but (you didn't write back after my last letter) I had exams in there somewhere, and then my brain imploded and became a neutron brain, and I was a basket case for awhile, but I'm feeling much better now.

See. I'm typing this one. Why? I don't know. I can't even use different colored pens this time.

Little annoying things that piss me off but nobody cares about. My 'They Might Be Giants' first album hasn't got snowmen on the disc. When I was down in the U.S.A. their version did. Guess we can tell what country they're from, eh? Stupid ignorant artsy assholes that run explicit homosexual material in the S.F.U. newspaper (called The Peak), and cut down anyone who said they didn't like that in the school newspaper as homophobic bug me as well. I've got no problem with this information, but it was more explicit than necessary, and really, The Peak is a school newspaper and not the homosexual population's newsletter. And, to top it off, the information given was false (yes, I did read some of it. Big deal). They said that you can't get AIDS from swallowing cum, which is untrue, as stomach acids do not kill HIV viruses. I hate this horrible dance-beat bullshit rap crap that idiots like Vanilla Ice keep pumping out. I also hate the disgusting crap from groups (I won't even call them a band) like *2 Live Crew* that are incredibly sick. Robert Plant's music is sexually disgusting ("Squeeze me baby, till the juice runs down my leg. The way you squeeze my lemon, I'm gonna fall right out of bed.", "With your head, heart arms and legs wrapped around my family pride.", "Big Love", "Gonna give you every inch of my love.", "With my one hand loose I aim to satisfy, . . . 'cause I'm your tall cool one, and I'm built to please"), but at least he used some tact, and inventive sexual innuendo (you need to know what he's talking about to pick it up), rather than out and out say 'Fuck her up the ass', or whatever.

I would like to tell you how much I'm enjoying *Cerebus,* and how much I love the art, but I fear that if I did, I would sound like some dumb shithead again, so maybe I'll just wait until *Melmoth* is over, and then I can sound like a real big asshole as I toss praise all around for *Melmoth,* a little for *Jaka's Story.* Then I'll go back and talk about how much I loved *High Society* (reprints) and how well *Church & State* is going (also reprints) Bet you can't wait, huh?

"Ale?" "Aye". I sure hope Cerebus doesn't turn into an alcoholic basket case. That would be too bad. But then again, I'm sure you would do the best alcoholic in the history of comics, so go ahead and do what you want. Even if I don't like it, I'll respect you for doing what you do (in the comic, anyways, and as long as you don't sell out).

I wasn't going to do this, but the covers have been particularly awe-inspiring as of late. Especially the sunset one. Yow.

Apparently I am considered to be psychotic by a large portion of the population (and, I imagine, all females, the way they avoid me). This annoys me a lot, since I've yet to get a date, and I'm really not all that repulsive looking.

Oh yeah, I'm sick of people cutting down *Superman* and *X-Men,* and the rest of the big two's comics. Sure, I think that Superman is a shitty book, but really. These books are intended for children. When you were young, did you want to see Superman contemplate his homosexual feelings for that camera kid, or did you want to see him beat up some awful bad guy? I personally think that Batman is too dark and gritty, as it stands. It should be lightened up and returned to little mystery use-your-mind stories. The limited series for mature readers is where all the gritty dark stories should take place. As it stands, almost all continuing series (since you, Dave, are a God, though Cerebus doesn't fall into this category) usually become shit after a few issues, I think that First has the right idea with releasing a bunch of limited series. No more incredibly shitty filler issues. And there's always time to work out the story the way it was intended, rather than get it done for next month (shades of *Watchmen*).

And for that matter, the *X-Men* is a good book. It has action, excitement, and character development. I think Claremont does good work. How come Psylocke doesn't get it on with Storm? See that little code approved bit in the corner? Claremont is restricted by bureaucracy, both in Marvel and in the Comic Code people. Even he didn't want to see a *Wolverine* continuing series. Especially as of late, the book has been getting back to why I like it. Even *X-Factor* is getting in line (Claremont's working that one too. No coincidence).

Granted, Marvel is guilty of cheap marketing ploys (ie five different versions of *X-Force* #1), but that is bureaucracy again. There are too many Wolverine-like characters nowadays, but that's what Marvel buys, so that's what artists and writers make. It is the company's fault. I think Claremont does a lot with what he is allowed to do.

Also, apparently it is cool to slash any successful company. I imagine a lot of people who write in calling *X-Men* crap came to that conclusion after reading a Cerebus letter column, rather than before. Many big two comics may seem simplistic and stupid to us, but most of us are in our twenties (I'm eighteen, and have been reading since the start of *Jaka's Story*) or older, so the stories are not intended for us, but for much younger children.

Remember the big things of my generation: *Star Wars, Star Trek, Micronauts.* All had (successful) comic books, Now I know I bought the first and last ones (wasn't a Trekkie. None of our channels carried it), and I didn't care about the story too much. I wanted action and good triumphing over evil. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* are the same thing. A little too violent, perhaps, but they give children something fun they can read, watch, and play with. I once thought that *Transformer* comics were lousy. I see now that I outgrew them and not that their quality decreased. It is sad that a good comic like *TMNT* was kid-ified, mass-marketted, and reduced from it's more mature stature, but shit happens.

It's this way: *The Dark Knight, Nexus, Aliens, Luther Arkwright, Ironwood, Elementals, Cerebus, Faust, Love and Rockets, Hawkworld,* and *Heavy Metal,* for instance, are intended for us, a (supposedly) more mature (and petty) age group, and *TMNT* (now), *Superman, Batman, Avengers,* and the like are intended for younger audiences. And I think the companies should go back to producing them this way. Too much grit is bad for impressionable young minds. Wolverine and the Punisher and Batman resort to too much violence and blood-letting than children should see. This should occur in the periodical mature-readers limited series.

So, before you knock a title, think first about who it's intended for, and if it's too simplistic, simply put it back on the shelf. If no one buys it, then maybe your point will get across. If a kid buys it, maybe their point will get across.

Holy moley. I didn't think I could belabor a point like that. Maybe I should switch into an arts faculty, if I can bullshit so much on a trivial detail.

Well, Dave, I'm in Vancouver for the summer so let me know if you're doing any con. over here. I'd love to meet you in person. If I spent several hundred dollars on a *Cerebus* #1, would you sketch a Cerebus head in

it for me? I'd pay you twenty bucks.

This is one hell of a long letter, so I'd best leave it as is. I'll write again soon. You've been warned.

Love you guys,

Pseudo stratified ciliated columnar epithelial tissually,

Terry Jones
Rm 460, Shell House, SFU
Burnaby, B.C.
V5A 1S6

P.S. I need a girlfriend. Any takers? I read *Cerebus*, and science fiction. I've got a very promising (and lucrative) future in Computer Engineering. I love almost all music except rap, especially *Pink Floyd* (my favourite), and late sixties/early seventies hippy rock. I'm kinda weird, but I'm really not psychotic, I can make almost anyone laugh a lot, and I'm a Scorpio. I lift weights, fence, draw, and am learning to play guitar and compose music. I've got kinda reddish hair, blue eyes, and I'm not all that repulsive. I also have a low self-esteem. Red-headed female bodybuilder preferred, with same interests, and a degree in biochemistry, but I'm not choosy.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

The main reason for this letter is a change in my address. I've moved back in with my parents for the time being, and I'm looking at some possible new studies for me, while I'm working part-time for the PTT (the Dutch postal service).

I hope you and Ger are doing well. We loyal Cerebus readers have so little information to go by regarding your well being. The only way to tell you're still alive is Cerebus, really. If it stops coming in, I'll really get worried.

Melmoth is great (do you ever get tired of hearing this?). I'm glad to see a lot of the characters passing through, even though the Cirinists haven't dealt gently with some of them. (Did you have to do that to Archbishop Posey? Alright, he is a little twerp, but five years hard labour will probably kill him. Look what happened to Oscar.) Cerebus' slow awakening from inactivity/ depression is wonderfully portrayed. There is only one thing I don't understand, though. Aardvarks are very rare; in fact most people don't know what Cerebus is. Yet no one acts like he looks very different from humans. And the Cirinists haven't arrested him yet, though spotting him would be very easy (perhaps they think he died during the Final Ascension). I hope these remarks made some sense to you; I just had a little difficulty putting my thoughts on paper.

The shop where I buy my comics (*Eppo Strips* in Eindhoven — Hi to Mari, Jos, LP, Jan and the others) finally ordered a couple of the telephone books, which were sold out within a week: I bought one *(High Society)* and two of my friends each bought both *Cerebus* and *High Society*. Will the new printings of *Church & State I & II* and *Jaka's Story* also be made available for direct sales? (Did I get this one right, or did I just make a fool of myself?) Will you please *think* about reprinting the *Swords* back-up stories in the bi-weekly issues? There is probably no chance I will find one of the *Swords* volumes here in Holland and I'm really curious about the "What happened between 20 and 21" story. And what about the little Cerebus stories? Will they be reprinted?

Well, I don't seem to have any more time to spare right now, since "Twin Peaks" is starting in a minute. Til next time.

Jan Pieter de Graaf
Beatrixlaan I
4645 HD Putte
The Netherlands

P.S. You're still welcome whenever you're in Holland.

P.P.S. Sorry about the handwriting, but my Mom is using the PC at the moment. Better luck next time.

P.P.P.S. Could you ask Alan Moore whether he's ever going to finish "Big Numbers". I really liked the first two issues and I'm eagerly awaiting a third. Also tell him I like his "From Hell" very much.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

This is Rob and Larry just checking in.

Remember how I wrote to you last summer whining about *(he's always whining about something)* how I lost touch with my friends and I owed Rob Lavender breakfast from 1985? Well, the clown finally showed up. I bought him breakfast in Boston at a place called the Salty Dog. When I split Worcester in 1985, I was penniless and Rob bought me some eggs at a dive called Ron's Spa as a going-away present. Now, *he's* penniless and I *just have too damn much money. (The young red-head has left and Larry's talking to his dad because it's Father's Day—I don't think he'll mind my finishing his sentence). He took me to this ritzy tourist brunch type place and dropped a lotta dough on some average food which way over compensated for the greasy meal I'd once bought him. But you can't argue with the rich. Our waitress was cute, but didn't laugh at our jokes consistently enough to make it an excellent meal. But life goes on.*

Thanks for everything, Dave!

Larry Young
Yeah, what *he* said.
Rob Lavender

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I just finished reading Cerebus #146 tonight, and after perusing some of the always entertaining letters in Aardvark Comment, I felt compelled to do something I probably should have done a long time ago: write you and say why I've enjoyed your work so much over the years. Yeah, I know, you get a shitload of letters blowing sunshine up your ass, so why write one more? It's because I figure after eight years of reading Cerebus (longer than I've read any other comic, and after fifteen years of the hobby, that's saying something, damn it!) I owe it to you to let you know how good I think you are at this medium. So, without further adieu, the reasons why I know I'll keep reading this book 'til I'm 30 or so, when this series finally ends.

1) The letters. I've never seen a letter page where the creator lets so many hilarious to strange to just plain fucked up insult-to-good-society offerings reach the printed page. It's (get this) a *healthy* practice to allow all these opinions of real people of all types to be seen by those of us who enjoy the book. I wish more folks could be exposed to this letter page because it really makes you think about the diversity of mind-set that's out there. Then again, maybe we Cerebusites are the only ones open-minded enough (or bizarre enough) to appreciate this stuff. By the way the letter page just keeps getting better. The recent letters going off on different viewpoints of feminism are great. I also like the letters that discuss ganja, which brings me to my next point.

2) I have to admire a man who can write and draw a book of this caliber when he's been baked almost non-stop for years. Shit, I've been toking (albeit a little more moderately than that) for about three years, and I consider

it a challenge just to be able to read a few of the more complex issues of High Society when I'm *high* and make sense of it all. That you could talk to us about that in your Notes from the President just adds to the open-air environment that you have established. I'm not using the "L" word to describe this atmosphere, because I figure you hate that word by now, with good reason. I also admire you for being able to quit (still being good right?) although I must say a dream of mine has been to get stoned with you.

3) Your strong feelings about Creator's rights as expressed in Cerebus are the only arena I've seen that never stops pushing for the end of exploitation of creators by publishers like Marvel, DC, and others. You have carried out the fight for people like Jack Kirby as admirably as anyone. Thinking about what DC did to Siegel and Shuster makes me sick, too, man. Wherever I live, I'll always have up the Cerebus poster you did which donates its proceeds to the Creator's Rights Fund. Keep it up.

4) No, I'm not forgetting the most important reason I read Cerebus, that being the content itself. I've loved every phase the book and the character have taken, from the Conan parody to the criticisms of politics and religion to even more underlying and serious themes concerning feminism and the intriguing facets of the female gender. That takes guts. But, Dave, it's been about three years since Cerebus has played an active/central role in the storyline. I miss the cynical, greedy little runt! After all, he's what I fell in love with first about this comic. I understand it should take a while for someone to start formulating sentences again after nearly touching/becoming God only to find out it's all bullshit. More importantly I understand you're probably a little bored with the aardvark after all this time and want to put your creative energies toward more intellectual scenes than Cerebus hacking up some stupid brute or shoving a cooked turkey over Boobah's head, but still . . . PLEASE?

Enough! I've written a short novel as it is. I just wanted to get this out to you. Cerebus is the best thing to ever happen to comics. It's not just for anyone; it's only for those who enjoy quality satire and overall commentary. Oh, yeah, tell Gerhard I think you two are one of the best art teams in the business. God, I wish this book didn't have to end at #300!

A fan 'till you die and beyond,

Kevin Wilson
Beloit College Box #1726
700 College Street
Beloit, Wis
USA 53511

P.S. One last thing I really appreciate is that you take the time to answer all these letters. I miss your comments on the letter page but it's worth it to know you try and personally answer them.

P.P.S. On the off chance you do publish this, a short message to a college buddy: Rich! Surprise! Since you never miss a letter in these pages, I thought I'd let you just stumble across this. And no, I didn't "talk to Bob" while I wrote this!

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

After reading issue 146, I felt compelled to write in response to several letters I've seen in Aardvark Comment. I last wrote after #92, the issue where Astoria was raped. I was alternately disgusted and thrilled by that issue. Disgusted, because of the brutality of the rape, and thrilled, because your art and writing style made it seem so real.

But the real reason I'm writing is to defend, as best as I can, the anti-abortion platform. Let me state for the record that I'm a white, married 29-year old male, who is a liberal Democrat *and* virulently anti-religious. I believe that the birth control issue does not have to be automatically linked with the abortion issue. I am very much in favor of a woman's right to choose, BEFORE the fact. After conception, doesn't the fetus have a right to choose? Or, do we take the stand that since the fetus can't speak, the mother automatically has the right to terminate life? As an extension, do you think that mutes and people with cerebral palsy are forfeit?

The easiest way to avoid strife on this issue is to educate everybody on proper birth control, family planning, and general sex education.

The old joke says that if men don't like abortions, then maybe they shouldn't have one. There is merit in that opinion, but since everyone, males and females, are required to vote on the subject, then I have to do what I think is right. After all, voting is just an opinion. And thanks for listening to mine.

To segue into another subject, this letter is guilty of everything I dislike about Aardvark Comment. All of the letters seem to be about the issues you raise, instead of the comic book itself. I remember when you got all sorts of banter back and forth on Cerebus (the aardvark not the magazine). During the time of your greatest work (*High Society* and *Church & State*) you received letters, pro and con, from people from all walks of life. Since *Cerebus* (the magazine, *certainly* not the aardvark!) has become politically correct, a bunch of same-thinking ultra-liberals have jumped on the bandwagon. Or have you only chosen to print those letters? I guess I'm just nostalgic for the old days, when Cerebus appeared in his own comic.

Eric Jones
6402 Mae Anne Ave. #123
Reno, NV
USA 89523-1796

P.S. As an answer to C. Carlson, you're damn right I would kill the maggots *IF* they became a health hazard to human. Call me hypocritical, but I believe humans are superior and special. So special *that all* must be saved. Unless you move to Sweden or Switzerland you live in a country that condones war. Now who's hypocritical?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Sir:

I am a member of the working class of this country. I am 66 years of age. I took part (reluctantly) in a war against a *Capitalist* dictator. You probably know who I mean. I am a *Left Wing Socialist.* A mortal enemy of Capitalisme. I am suspicious of you and your noble cause 'great britain' (take note of the dimunitiors) is a godless Capitalist country. The aforesaid place is probably the begging-bowl of europe- if not the world. I want to be part of a 'Socialist Democratic Republic.' I am totally against 'Privilege' of any kind (except of course Spiritual, Humanistic Privilege). By your face and your name and your obvious servile worship of 'so-called Royalty' you are living very comfortably indeed! I am NOT living in such luxurious circumstances—and, I don't wish to be. I am (like all the other 'Working Class' people of this country) living in very straightened financial circumstances. I suggest that you sell the crown jewels to the americans—who will pay whatever you ask. And send the So-called Royals to Uncle Sam's Bosom where they will be worshipped 'ad infinitum', and probably become richer than they

were here. PTO, If! myself (and the few true socialists that are left in this 'zone of things—this septic island' (I am funny aren't I?) There would be no shortage of funds for the people of this country. I have been a vegetarian for 20 years (if I can't murder the innocent creatures then I can't eat them can I?).

I would be what is called 'A Moral Coward!'. I believe in Extra-terrestrials and have been very close to them. Priorities my boy, priorities! Royalty and such privileged Dinosaurs are as the dictionary states — ANARCHRONISMS! and belong with 'Alice in Wonderland' down the rabbit hole (also your Royals are very bloodthirsty buggers aren't they?).

A.E. Blethan
(welsh)
3 Medlar Street
London S3S 0JU
England

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

Listen, you know everything, right? Or, at least, you know people who know everything, right? Like that dude who hangs out up on the moon and gives cheery little horoscopes to tourists.

So tell me, what the fuck made me think I wanted to spend a month tucked up in a cabin in the mountains of North Carolina alone? I mean, I've only been here for four days and I'm already writing to Aarvark Comment. Not that I didn't want to—I always want to—it's just not something I usually get around to doing.

My own guess would be that a combination of paranoia and general lack of direction are responsible for my voluntary captivity. Not that it's really awful here or anything. It's fucking beautiful as a matter of fact. There's just something spooky about spending late nights in the same state that elected Jesse Helms. And living in a dry county; I didn't know about that until after I paid the rent. I'll have to walk FOUR FUCKING MILES to get one lousy beer. And it's not like people don't drink here or something. There's enough beer cans and vodka bottles left by some considerate assholes in the woods behind me to last me a good month of serious daily binging.

Anyway—enough bitching about my own problems; I'll start bitching about letter-column-type problems. Frankly this whole censorship thing is starting to get on my nerves. As usual, people are attacking a result rather than the cause. I don't think anyone can really make a substantial argument that pornography, specifically the *Playboy/Hustler*, type doesn't objectify women. The question is: why do objectified women appeal so much to our society? Might it have something to do with the historical place of women in western society? Ie. as objects men pursue and win. Look at a basic plot outline of any goddman romance novel: man wants woman; obstacle prevents attaining her; men defeats obstacle and wins women's everlasting love. Not the best example actually—I've never read a romance novel—but it is the paradigm of the courtly romance, which definitely survives in all those hack fantasy novels we've been inundated with for the past decade or so (not to mention Richard Corben's preview in *Cerebus* 146, albeit with a slight deviation, since the woman gets her way, sort of).

What I'm saying here is that banning that little frustrated thirteen-year old guy from having his *Playboy* hidden under his bed to wank off to late at night isn't going to stop the objectification of women. That poor kid is just gonna get out his African issue of *National Geographic* and beat off to foreigner's breasts, just like our grandfathers used to do. What we need to do is change our societal attitudes which tend to treat women as objects. I don't claim to have the foggiest idea of how to do this, but hasn't history at least proved that banning a work just tends to increase its appeal? (Incidentally, how many of you have ever tried to read *Ulysses* or *Lady Chatterly's Lover* for their erotic content?)

As for kiddie-porn, I don't have any real problem with its existence per se, but I have some big problems with its creation. On one hand, if letting some guy beat off to pictures of Ricky Schroeder is going to keep him from molesting my next-door neighbour's six-year old daughter then I'm all for it. On the other hand, I can't really condone its creation. There would seem to be quite a difference between letting a twenty-one year old woman decide to flash a camera than letting that six-year old girl.

Now on my next subject: feminism. The idea that Thatcher is a feminist is ludicrous. She's the most reactionary, patriarchal bitch I've ever seen. I have a hard time even believing she's really a woman.

Feminism, as I understand it, is about the need to embrace the maternal, nurturing side in ALL of us, as frequently alluded to by those sappy New Agers who want a return to Paganism. A bit silly, I admit, but isn't it preferable to Jehovah, the almighty Father, who is gonna beat the shit out of you if you disobey him (ie. send you into everlasting agony). Now if you take a close look, you might object that women have been some of the chief promoters of that Almighty Father—a valid point, I admit, though one might argue that women really didn't have many other options. I'm not talking about individual women here though; I'm talking about the concept of the feminine: a nurturing, adaptable, caring space.

I'd rather not say too much more on the issue, because as a man, I'll end up doing what men have been doing for the past few thousand years: telling women how they're supposed to be feminine. Instead I'll suggest that you all go read some feminist theory: critics like Kristeva, Helene Cixous, and Luce Irigaray (no—I haven't read much of these people, but I'm familiar with them). Incidentally, I seem to remember someone saying that no important work has been done on feminism in the past decade. Go do your homework. Alice Jardine's *Gynesis* (1985)—an attempt to synthesize American and French feminism—is brilliant, but it's tough going if you haven't read all of your Derrida, Foucalt, Deleuze, etc.

Now, what else has pissed me off recently. I know: Phil Crissman's letter in #146. About this idea that the rich "earned" their money: did wealthy southern plantations owners "earn" the right to enslave Africans since their own continent developed faster (and, consequently, ran out of space and resources faster)? Did United Fruit "earn" the right to pay Argentinians shit-wages so that their food supply can be exported to feed all those hard-working Americans? Granted, not every wealthy capitalist is a pig, but I've yet to hear of a corporation that isn't strictly comprised of them.

Incidentally, if you had read Malthus you would realize that over-population isn't a matter of too many people in too little space; that's called congestion, and it will lead to its own problem, like gang warfare and substandard housing (slums, ghettos). Overpopulation is a situation in which you have too few resources for your population, ie. you can't feed your people anymore. That's why a country like Bangladesh or Ethiopia would be considered overpopulated, whereas Japan would be better described as congested.

As for the need to begin new cities: cities were formed by all those pioneers who wanted to go exploit resources from another continent so that they could get rich and famous, or whatever. They needed enough people to survive for years at a time though, so they needed an entire community, while today that kind of development can be done much more simply, thanks to modern technology. (Incidentally, that was Malthus' big mistake; he couldn't predict the rapid changes in technology that now permits something like 2% of our country to feed the other 98%).

Okay, I think I'm done bitching now. See what having a month alone can do to a guy, even when it's only been a few days?

Oh, before I forget, *Cerebus* is great and all of that. I really don't have a whole lot to say about it right now; it's your book, and I want you to do whatever you want to with it. (I can't see someone writing to Faulkner saying "let's see more from Benjy's perspective", though people did convince Dickens to change the ending of *Great Expectations*.) Suffice it to say that I've been reading since issue 70 or so, have collected most of the back issues in reprints, and plan to continue reading, regardless of whether or not you consider yourself a feminist (incidentally, how does Ger stand on the issue). It's the only comic I still collect on anything even resembling a regular basis (though I did pick up Scott Russo's *Jizz* recently, and I honestly can't decide whether or not he's just a racist fuck; any comments?). I'm working on my masters, and all that shit. If you do something about censorship real quick I'll ask to use it in the course I'm designing for next spring. The only comix I have so far are R. Crumb and crew.

Sorry this thing turned out so long and rambling. Feel free to edit it however you want. I'm printing my semi-permanent address (I'll eventually get whatever goes there), in case you or anyone else wants to bitch me out or make supportive comments or something.

Take care,

John Wells
525-3 W. Park Avenue
Tallahassee, FL
USA 32301

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Editor,

Happy Birthday, "Club Canada"!

At the time of your 124th year of nationhood, the historic tragedy is starting to surface: Canada has been reduced to a CLUB MED mentality.

After the Meech Lake Discord, the Oka Crisis and the never ending Anglo/Francophone cacophony, we have become a nation of pop-hedonists. Today's Canadian appears to live for personal or regional aggrandizement. There is little that appears to move us collectively with STRONG NATIONAL FEELING. In fact, the tragedy (for Canada) is that Quebec reflects the only true, generic and collective NATURAL spirit of nationalism—for the good of Quebec as a whole. I am envious of them for that reason.

The key to our dilemma was best spoken by Leo Tolstoy, who once wrote that ". . . life without principle is not worth living". Canada now ranks among the most apathetic nations of the world. We cannot cooperate between provinces on the level of tariff reduction and appear to have no intestinal fortitude (call it "grit") about our national identity. We are run by a federal government that is only marginally trusted, at best.

At a time in world history when the European Economic Community is uniting twelve countries across their ethnic and nationalistic barriers to become one of the greatest economic powers in the entire history of world trade, Canada has difficulty deciding its level of cooperation with the United States and among itself.

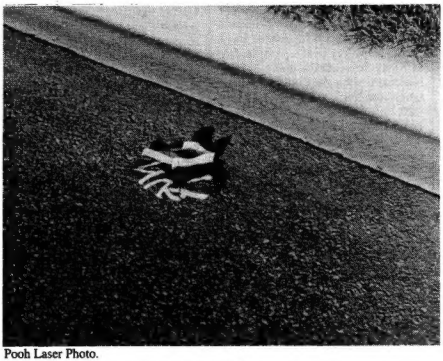
Life without principle is the Canadian way—a life dedicated to political cliches and self-serving gestures meant to make us look good to the rest of the world.

Since we as Canadians have never truly fought (personally) for our national identity, we do not PRIZE the enormous opportunity called Canada. I do, because I am an immigrant here. On Canada Day, Canada deserves better than a statutory holiday. This nation deserves patriots!

Sincerely yours,

G. Leslie Balogh
136 Eileen Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M6N 1W1

★★★★★★★★★★



Pooh Laser Photo.

TO ANYONE WHO CAN HELP,

It happened again! I was innocently walking to my friend's house when I discovered it. Right on my street. Please, someone out there has to help me understand. It really is getting to me.

I started checking my own clothes at regular intervals. My laundry is inventoried before and after being washed.

These bizarre undergarment sightings must stop!

Help me!

Tigger
(Back Beyond Bramelea)

P.S. It's still there! A week later and it's still there!

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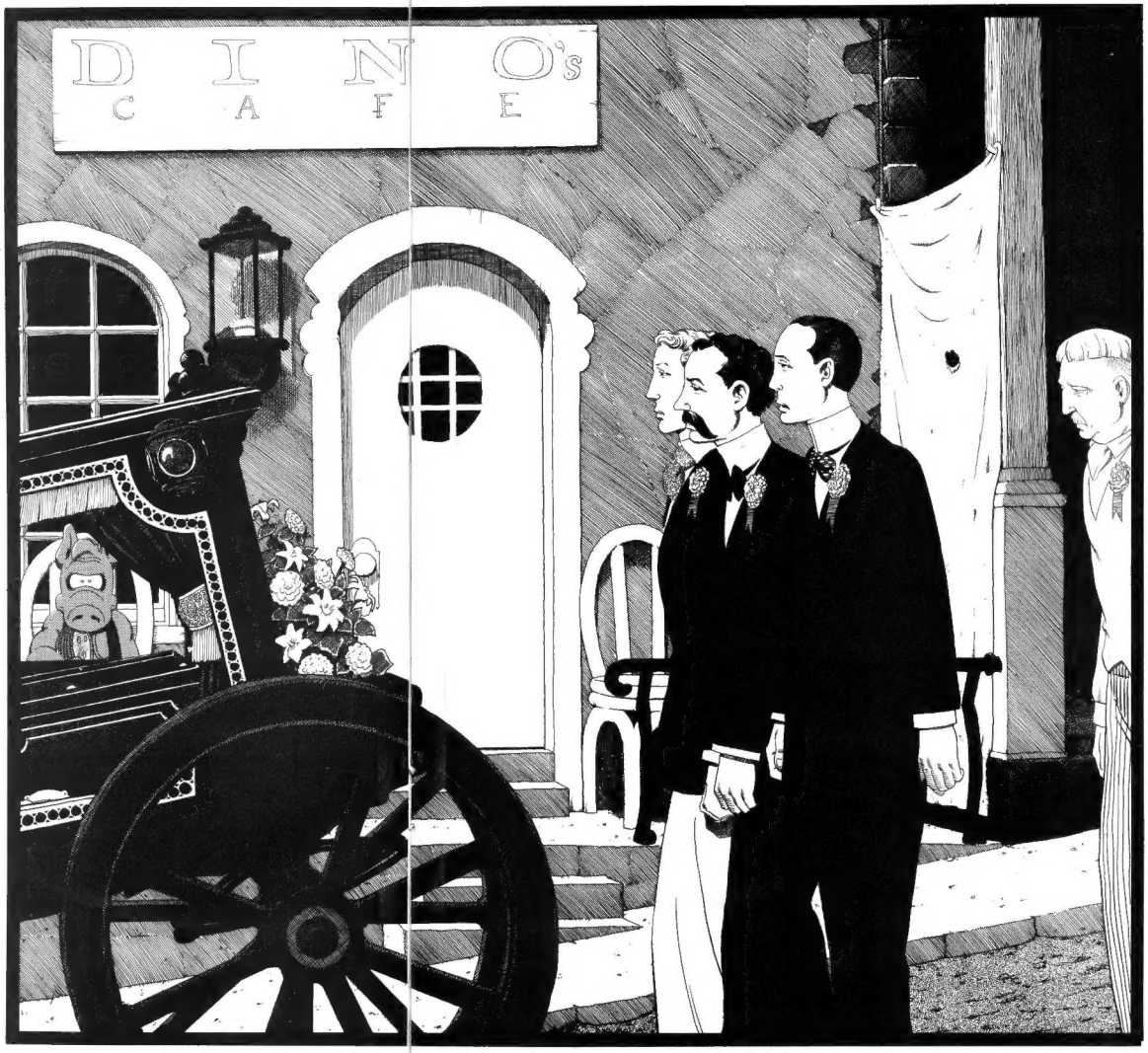
Next morning at 9 o'clock, the funeral started from the hotel—we all walked to the Church of St. Germain behind the hearse—Alfred Douglas, Reggie Turner and myself, Dupoirier, the proprietor of the hotel, Henri the nurse, and Jules, the servant of the hotel, Dr. Hennion and Maurice Gilbert, together with two strangers whom I did not know.